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ABSTRACT

This paper describes aspects of doing televised rhetorical analysis as they relate to the promotion of college awareness in a particular target market. Considerations in the paper include variables that most professors encounter in their efforts to address the "service" expectations of their employment and how these variables can be commensurate with significant public relations goals of the institution. The professor/author of the paper was invited to do a rhetorical analysis of a gubernatorial primary debate carried by Ohio News Network television, based on his experience doing similar types of rhetorical analysis in various mass media markets and mass media channels, and he decided to cultivate a relationship with the news organization as a means to promote the institution where he teaches, Ohio Dominican College. The paper notes that how educators address "service" expectations can differ markedly, but the objectives of such efforts are fairly consistent. (NKA)

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DOING TELEVISED RHETORICAL ANALYSIS AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING COLLEGE AWARENESS IN A TARGET MARKET

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This article will describe aspects of doing televised rhetorical analysis as they relate to the promotion of college awareness in a particular target market. Such considerations will include variables that most professors encounter in their efforts to address the "service" expectations of their employment and how these variables can be commensurate with significant public relations goals of the institution. How we address "service" expectations can differ markedly but the objectives of such efforts are fairly consistent.

Ohio News Network (ONN) is a 24 hour cable-television organization located in Columbus, Ohio and it is carried in major markets throughout the state seven days a week. There is also an Ohio News Network association of affiliated radio stations in all of Ohio's 88 counties. That is, each county has at least one radio station that is an Ohio News Network affiliate. These affiliates can broadcast programming that is conveyed by Ohio News Network television. Thus, when something is carried on Ohio News Network television it can also be broadcast on any number of the Ohio News Network affiliated radio stations.

In winter, 1998 I was invited to do rhetorical analysis of a gubernatorial primary debate carried by Ohio News Network television, based on my experience doing similar types of rhetorical analysis in various mass media markets and mass media channels, and made a decision at that time to seek to cultivate a relationship with the organization as a means to promote the institution I work for. Ohio Dominican College is located in Columbus, Ohio and a vast majority of Ohio Dominican students are from Ohio. Ohio is a target market for the college.

I can see that when I am engaging in rhetorical analysis that is carried throughout Ohio, with my name and institution affiliation conveyed verbally and as a visual graphic, I am introducing and reinforcing Ohio Dominican College in the minds of viewers. It is an indirect form of recruitment. When I appear on Ohio News Network television, and I am consistently referred to (orally and visually) as an Ohio Dominican College professor, this conveys that the mass media recognizes Ohio Dominican College as a legitimate source of information.

Thus, when the viewer hears of Ohio Dominican College as prospective college to attend (whether it be for him/herself, a family member, friend, business associate, etc.) he/she is already familiar with Ohio Dominican College as being a reputable institution A foundation of credibility has already been established. This kind of credibility is free and, in many cases, more effective than any credibility that the institution might seek to buy, in that it is conveyed via an unbiased news source.

I initially did periodic rhetorical analysis regarding the 1998 Ohio gubernatorial race and related stories, but in fall, 1998, I became a regular and frequent analyst regarding the investigation, prosecution and impeachment of President Clinton. It was during this period that I appeared 2-3 times a week and started to hear from friends, colleagues, and former students around the state indicating that they'd seen me on Ohio News Network or heard me on an Ohio News Network affiliate radio station. This reinforced my awareness that my being on Ohio News Network was especially beneficial to my employer as a means of spreading the name and credibility of Ohio Dominican College. Similarly, students in my classes would indicate they'd seen or heard me. This augmented

applications in the classroom as much of what I spoke about on television related to my expertise and courses I teach.

Since the impeachment of President Clinton, I have continued my involvement with Ohio News Network with a variety of political stories. I can expect to get a request from them to offer commentary any time there is a political story that requires more than a basic interpretation. Sometimes it will be a short term story, such as a visit by a major U.S. politician to Ohio, or it can be a long term story that will involve multiple visits to the studio by me, such as the 2000 presidential election and the subsequent vote recount issues related to the candidacies of Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Another factor that has been a boost to my credibility, and the credibility of Ohio Dominican College, involves who appears with me when I am carried on Ohio News Network. There are a variety of formats that I can appear within: Ohio's Talking (a 30 minute, sometimes 60 minute, viewer call-in show carried Monday-Friday nights during prime time), Prime Time Ohio (a daily news program), news specials, and breaking news segments. All of these formats are replayed at other times. When I appear on Ohio's Talking, I can be interviewed alone or there can be another guest (or multiple guests). When I am on alone this gives me more air time but when I am on with another person this allows me to share the credibility that he/she conveys. For instance, I have appeared on Ohio's Talking episodes with Thomas Moyer, Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court (he and I were the only guests). He brings an immense amount of credibility to the show and I gain from that credibility in that it conveys Ohio News Network recognizes me as being credible enough to be a discussant with a person of his stature.

Doing televised rhetorical analysis does take a significant amount of preparation time.

Rule number one is to never go on air unless you are prepared to offer legitimate commentary. Thus, I always make it a point to offer commentary only on matters I am knowledgeable about, that I can offer insight on, and when I can substantiate the position I am taking. There are times when I will qualify the limited perspective that I have on an issue or I will indicate I do not have ample expertise to comment on a subject. I have found the Ohio News Network producers to appreciate my candor in this regard. Both they and the guest look foolish if a commentary is found to lack legitimacy. I have found credibility between me and the various producers to be essential. It takes awhile to build credibility but it is worth the effort as solid two-way credibility is an excellent foundation to work from. Thus, they know I won't speak beyond my expertise and I know they will not put me in an awkward situation without some type of warning.

A broad based education and an emphasis on lifelong learning has been helpful to me in my work as a rhetorical analyst. I completed my Ph.D. at Ohio University in 1982 and have worked as a full-time faculty member since then. I do research and publish regularly in relevant areas. I am also a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserve where I am assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency as a cultural analyst. The latter has given me extensive experience with assessing situations and conveying grounded analysis. This kind of skill parallels the skill required in doing televised rhetorical analysis.

I have found it very helpful to cultivate a variety of legitimate sources to draw information from. This information varies, depending upon the situation being analyzed, but the rhetorical principles I critique from do not vary as much. I continually reorient myself with basic rhetorical principles and new applications using these principles. As

such I find that, regardless of the situation being focused on, I seek to analyze the logic being conveyed, the credibility of the presenter(s), emotional appeals being conveyed, any symbolism that can be identified, motivations for observed behaviors and effects of said behaviors, and past examples of similar types of situations. From this I may offer a hunch of what we might see in the future regarding the evolution of the situation and place the event in some type of historical context.

I consistently seek not to overstep the bounds of my expertise. If I am questioned about some aspects of the situation that I do not have expertise with I will not offer an analysis or I might qualify my response by indicating I have limited (if any) expertise with the area under consideration Using such an approach provides me with an enhanced sense of confidence in that I know I can respond to any question regarding statements I've made. If I don't go out on a limb I don't have to worry about lacking substantiation for my position.

As mentioned earlier, this televised rhetorical analysis counts as part of my "service" to the college. Each year my teaching, professional development and service to the college (internally and externally) is evaluated. My service to the college will typically include representing the college in a variety of settings off-campus as a way of promoting the college name in various public forums. I have found doing televised rhetorical analysis to be very fruitful in this regard in that one televised appearance will give me and the college exposure to a large number of viewers and my credibility and the credibility of the college is established by the television station. When I speak in front of a live (non-television related) audience I will generally speak to about 20-25 people and I will basically need to establish my credibility with that audience. I don't even have the

benefit of having a host to showcase me and my insights (as I do on television). Thus, doing televised rhetorical analysis is a very effective means to concurrently promote college awareness in a target market and address my college service objectives.